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SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: Ontario and the Fight Against TIP:
Better than Most, but Still Could Do More

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: A review of trafficking in persons (TIP) issues in Ontario shows that the anti-TIP effort here has shown real improvement from previously and is better than many abroad that our officers have observed. Still, the anti-TIP effort here still faces three problems that limit the efficacy of groups combating human trafficking. First, no Provincial agency has the lead on addressing human trafficking, nor are there social programs or services specifically targeting trafficking victims. Second, trafficking victims lack sufficient information about their rights, human trafficking laws, and entitlements such as the Temporary Residence Permit (TRP). Third, there is inadequate communication and collaboration among NGOs, local government, and law enforcement. On the plus side, the RCMP and municipal law enforcement are making strides in terms of training and raising awareness among law enforcement officers; individual police divisions are taking the initiative to create their own programs to help trafficking victims; and Ontario NGOs are a ready resource to help local government and law enforcement agencies tackle the problem. End Summary.

12. (U) Consulate staff and a visiting G/TIP officer recently met with representatives of Ontario's Ministry of Justice, Ontario Victim Services Secretariat, and the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Although they did not speak directly to Ontario Government policies, they told us about recent criminal cases involving human trafficking and services available to trafficking victims. These offices currently have no projects addressing the issue of human trafficking nor do they have any partnerships with NGOs or the police services. Services for trafficking victims are available through programs established for other groups such as domestic violence victims.

13. (U) Starting in 2006, persons claiming to be trafficking victims have been able to apply to Canadian immigration authorities for a 180-day Temporary Residence Permit (TRP). During the 180 days, TRP holders may decide to return home or stay in Canada to assist in the investigation and prosecution of traffickers. Additionally, trafficking victims who hold a TRP may apply for a Canadian work permit and are eligible for federal assistance and support services for trafficking victims. According to our RCMP contact, there have been only sixty-one applications for Temporary Resident Permits (TRPs), with twenty-six issued in all of Canada since the inception of the TRP.

Law Enforcement Moving First

14. (U) Canadian federal law enforcement and some local police services are becoming more proactive in combating trafficking in persons. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police

(RCMP) has taken the lead on the police effort in Ontario, providing anti-trafficking training to local police services. The training is a full-day law enforcement workshop and includes a briefing from Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA), human trafficking case studies from throughout Canada, and presentations from police services that have experience in prosecuting these cases. In 2008, the RCMP conducted seven workshops, mostly in smaller cities where police might face TIP problems but be less acquainted with how to deal with it. For 2009, the RCMP has 10 workshops planned in the GTA. Demand for the courses has steadily increased.

15. (U) Peel Regional Police, which provides policing services to some 1.2 million people in the western part of the GTA, has been ahead of others on this issue. This year, they obtained the first two human trafficking convictions for domestic trafficking in Canada. They also currently have an additional 10 cases with human trafficking charges in the courts. Previously, many cases would have been prosecuted under other criminal codes, such as "pimping" laws. (Note: In Ontario, police lay criminal charges and do not conduct pre-charge consultations with the government prosecutors (known as Crown attorneys). In more complicated cases, police may decide to consult with Crown attorneys prior to laying charges but they are not bound to follow the advice.) The officers responsible for these cases explained that since the inception of the anti-trafficking laws in 2005, their police service has been proactively seeking out possible victims in brothels, massage parlors, and escort services. Moreover, the Peel Police recently launched an initiative called "New Beginnings" in which officers in the unit secure community partnerships where business owners donate their time and/or services to assist

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trafficking victims.

Trafficking Victims Lacking Information

16. (U) Representatives of NGOs providing services to trafficking victims explained that in their view a lack of information about the trafficking laws and the TRP is the reason many more victims choose to not come forward and instead apply for refugee status. Moreover, immigration lawyers advise their clients that it is safer to claim refugee status because refugee status, if approved, provides permanent status whereas a TRP may be revoked at any time without appeal.

17. (U) Despite improvements in police training, NGO reps we talked to said that inadequate training also still plays a role in the reluctance of many trafficking victims to come forward. Some police officers not familiar with human trafficking stigmatize the victims and are unable to build the rapport necessary to earn their trust. Inadequate training also impedes some officers from recognizing the signs of human trafficking. This is especially detrimental in cases of international trafficking where gaining the victim's trust can be more difficult because traffickers often threaten their victims' families back home with harm.

-----NGOs Tackling
Trafficking and Seeing Increase in Domestic Cases

18. (U) One organization, FCJ Refugee Centre, claimed that in the past year they saw about eight trafficking victims coming through their doors. As a result, it has expanded its services to provide shelter and legal assistance to trafficking victims. Another group, Streetlights Support Services, runs a program called "Choices" which helps prostitutes find options to exit the sex trade. Among the over 700 sex trade workers it assisted this past year, it suggests that perhaps five were domestic trafficking victims. The FCJ Refugee Centre co-director told us that she has heard of similar numbers from other NGOs across the city. These NGOs we met told us they rarely have opportunities to provide input to local authorities on the creation of policies and programs to reach out to the

victims.

¶9. (U) NGOs say they are seeing a rising trend in domestic trafficking incidences, including more cases involving aboriginal youth trafficked from rural reservations to big cities in Canada and the U.S. RCMP and Peel Regional Police confirmed that local police services are finding more domestic trafficking than international cases. One RCMP officer told us that he just did not see international cases in the GTA

¶10. (U) Comment: While Ontario seems to have the resources to effectively combat both international and domestic trafficking in persons, a lack of coordination among the different groups has created a less than fully effective system. The numerous organizations and police officials with whom we met confirmed that distrust of authorities and a lack of information about available resources keeps some trafficking victims from coming forward. NGOs found that when foreign trafficking victims do come forward, they are often advised to seek refugee status instead of using the TRP process. At present, anti-trafficking efforts in Ontario are mostly carried out by the police and a number of relatively small groups acting independently and rarely collaborating. The provincial government up to now has not taken a leading role nor has it coordinated efforts to combat trafficking. We sense that upper echelon leadership in the Provincial government is necessary if Ontario is to take its anti-TIP efforts to the next level.

BYSFIELD